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5 September 1975

MEMORANDUM FOR: All NIOs

SUBJECT : The Predictive Record

Doc - please
let me see the
predict record
Thanks,

1. The DCI brought up on Friday morning the matter of forthcoming Congressional investigations into the predictive successes and failures of the Intelligence Community over the years -- particularly since the late 1960s. His point is that it behooves the Agency to supply on its own initiative information on successes and failures, rather than merely waiting defensively for the Congressional staffs to assemble a record on their own. He is, in short, interested in a sophisticated presentation of our side of the story, and in getting on the record for the committees the fact that intelligence had had a number of substantial successes even if some of them were less dramatic and publicized than its occasional real or apparent failures. He has in mind such subjects as forewarning of various Soviet missile innovations, the Soviet aircraft carriers, a number of very respectable analytical assessments on Vietnam, etc.

2. The principal action officer on this project will be the DDI, and the response to the request is to be ready within the next few days since this phase of the Congressional investigations will be coming up in the course of this month.

3. Ed Proctor has asked for NIO cooperation in preparing this, and specifically for suggestions concerning respectable or praiseworthy estimative successes in the course of the last, say, ten years. If you have in mind or can think of candidates in this category, would you please jot them down and send them to the front office so that they can be given to the DDI next Monday.

4. In a more general vein, I suggested to Ed -- and he agrees -- that a sophisticated treatment of this question

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should not be confined to discrete predictions of spot events but must also address the question of how well the Intelligence Community over sustained periods of time filled its responsibility of educating its readers on broad trends and underlying factors which condition and help determine the spot events which we are so often judged on exclusively. So if you have ideas falling under this more general kind of rubric, those too would be useful.



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Acting Deputy to the Director
for National Intelligence Officers

cc: Mr. Carver
Mr. Proctor✓

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ROUTING AND RECORD SHEET

SUBJECT: (Optional)

FROM:

James R. Lilley
NIO/China
5G-00

EXTENSION

NO.

DATE

9 September 1975

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TO: (Officer designation, room number, and building)

DATE

RECEIVED

FORWARDED

OFFICER'S INITIALS

COMMENTS (Number each comment to show from whom to whom. Draw a line across column after each comment.)

1.

D/DCI/NIO

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George,

My comments are thin gruel but so were the NIEs. I had a problem with NIEs which had good portions but would then dribble off into some countervailing speculations. These particular NIEs did not deal with military matters. It might be worthwhile to look at some of the military ones and see if their predictions, based on more concrete data, produced better results.

James R. Lilley

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18 September 1975

MEMORANDUM TO: George Carver, D/DCI/NIO

SUBJECT : DCI's Future Presentation of the Effectiveness
of Intelligence

1. A few thoughts that may be useful when you and Ed Proctor get together on the above. Keith's points about what can and cannot be estimated suggest a framework Colby could use that would make some useful philosophical points and give him an excuse for citing notable successes. The idea would be to organize the presentation by types of estimating and analytical problems. Several occur immediately in no particular order.

- a. The clandestinely planned event--Keith's point. Knowledge depends on access to planners. Sometimes we have it (examples). Sometimes we don't (others). For coups--the closer our relationship with existing government, the less our access to opposition groups.
- b. The accident of circumstances (your point).
- c. The not-yet-made decision. We can often tell far in advance that an event is possible or even likely. (Indo-Pak war, Indian nuclear explosion, etc, etc.) But we cannot be expected to predict confidently and convincingly without evidence, and there won't be any evidence until a decision is made.
- d. The contingency estimate (If...then...) may be proved right (examples). It may never be tested ("if" doesn't happen--examples). Or, it may be self-defeating, since the USG may be in a position to see that "if" does not occur. (examples)
- e. The negative estimate: X will not lead to Y. Many important ones of this sort (examples)
- f. The estimate that depends heavily on interpretation of evidence in being. Many military ones to cite. Colby suggests numbers of weapons. That's okay if


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the numbers support his argument. But I don't think it's our best story. It seems to me that we want to get as much mileage as we can out of greater depth of knowledge--e.g., ability to determine operational characteristics of weapons. Obviously this presents us with classification problems, but hopefully there are some suitable examples that we can talk about.

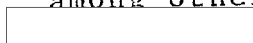
2. Such an approach would offer an opportunity not only to tout the successes but also to explain the "failures" in a non-defensive way.

3. If possible, it would also be useful to emphasize that choosing the right questions is a special skill. Hopefully we can find some examples of our own foresightedness in being first to address issues that later proved important.


Helene Boatner
A/NIO/E

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cc: Comptroller (FYI - relates to Blake memo of 10 September, among other things)

 NIO/WE

(wrote 5 Sept memo on A/D/DCI/NIO)

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